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E.O. 12356: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PREF HR PREF HR PREF HR BK

SUBJECT: TFSROL: SEVERE HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN B-H:
EYE-WITNESS DESCRIBES TORTURE/EXECUTIONS IN
LUKA AND BATKOVIC CAMPS, NAMES PERPETRATORS

INTRODUCTION

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1. (U) THIS IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF REPORTS OF INTERVIEWS OF WAR CRIMES VICTIMS CONDUCTED IN LATE 1993 IN MAOCA, BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA, BY A DART/ZAGREB FIELD REP AND AN AMCIT IRC REP WHILE THEY WERE IN THE AREA ASSESSING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE NEEDS. THIS REPORT NAMES VICTIMS AND, IN SOME CASES, PERPETRATORS AND DETAILS SPECIFIC CRIMES. THE PERSONS INTERVIEWED FOR THESE REPORTS SEEMED TO THE AMCIT INTERVIEWERS TO BE A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF HUNDREDS OF VICTIMS AND EYEWITNESSES NOW LIVING IN THE TUZLA POCKET, MANY OF WHOM ALREADY HAVE SWORN STATEMENTS ON FILE WITH LOCAL WAR CRIMES COMMISSIONS.

THE FIRST WITNESS

2. (LOU) MEHMED ARNAVTOVIC (STRICTLY PROTECT), HEREAFTER REFERRED TO AS THE WITNESS, IS A BOSNIAN MUSLIM FROM THE BRCKO MUNICIPALITY. HE WAS BORN JANUARY 1, 1964, AND WAS A CIVILIAN AT THE TIME OF HIS ARREST BY BOSNIAN SERB FORCES ON MAY 10, 1992.

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ARREST AND INCARCERATION IN BRCKO

3. (U) AT THE TIME OF HIS ARREST, THE WITNESS WAS AT HOME WITH HIS WIFE, PARENTS, SISTER IN LAW AND HER HUSBAND, AND SIX NEIGHBORS. THEY HAD ALL BEEN HIDING
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IN HIS HOUSE FOR TEN DAYS. ON MAY 10, BOSNIAN SERB SOLDIERS CAME TO THE HOUSE AND ARRESTED THE WITNESS, HIS FATHER, AND ANOTHER ADULT MALE RELATIVE AND TOOK THEM TO A TEMPORARY PRISON CAMP KNOWN AS "LUKA" IN THE PORT AREA OF BRCKO. THE WOMEN IN THE HOUSE WERE SET FREE BUT REQUIRED TO STAY IN ASSIGNED PLACES IN BRCKO.

4. (U) UPON ARRIVING AT LUKA, THE WITNESS WAS ORDERED INTO ONE OF A SERIES OF CONNECTED WAREHOUSES EACH OF WHICH WAS APPROXIMATELY 20 BY 50 METERS IN SIZE. THERE WERE ALREADY APPROXIMATELY 100 PRISONERS IN "HIS" WAREHOUSE WHEN THE WITNESS ENTERED. FOR THE FIRST 15 MINUTES, THE WITNESS AND THE OTHERS WERE

FORCED TO SIT WITH THEIR HEADS DOWN WHILE SERBIAN
SOLDIERS HIT THEM WITH RIFLE BUTTS. SEVERAL OF THE
MEN WERE EXECUTED ON THE SPOT BY GUNSHOTS TO THE HEAD.

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	P-01	RP-10	RPCS-01	SB-00	SP-00	SR-00	SSO-00
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15. (LOU) AFTER ABOUT 15 MINUTES, THE GUARDS CALLED
THE WITNESS'S NAME FOR A "HEARING." A FEW MINUTES
EARLIER, A RELATIVE OF THE WITNESS, AKIB HADZAJLIC
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(STRICTLY PROTECT), HEREAFTER REFERRED TO AS A.H.,
HAD BEEN CALLED. UPON ENTERING THE "HEARING ROOM,"

THE WITNESS SAW A.H. LYING ON THE FLOOR IN A POOL OF BLOOD HOLDING A CLOTH PRESSED AGAINST HIS HEAD. THE WITNESS WAS IMMEDIATELY HIT FROM BEHIND BY A MAN WITH A RUBBER TRUNCHEON, CAUSING HIM TO FALL ON TOP OF A.H. THE WITNESS WAS THEN ASKED IF HE KNEW WHERE A.H. HAD HIDDEN A VIDEO CAMERA WITH WHICH HE ALLEGEDLY WAS FILMING EVENTS IN BRCKO FOR CROATIAN TELEVISION. WHEN THE WITNESS SAID THAT A.H. NEVER HAD SUCH A CAMERA, THE WITNESS WAS KICKED AND BEATEN BY THE SERB INTERROGATORS, ALL OF WHOM WERE FROM BIJELJINA. BOTH MEN WERE THEN ASKED WHERE THEY HAD HIDDEN ARMS, AND WHEN THEY SAID THEY HAD NEVER HAD ANY WEAPONS, THEY WERE KICKED AND BEATEN UNTIL THE WITNESS WAS BLEEDING FROM HIS EARS.

16. (U) THE WITNESS WAS THEN ORDERED TO MAKE THE ORTHODOX CATHOLIC SIGN OF THE CROSS. THE WITNESS ASKED TO BE SHOWN THE PROPER WAY TO DO THIS, AND THEN PROCEEDED TO GENUFLECT 20 TO 30 TIMES BEFORE MAKING A MISTAKE FOR WHICH THE WITNESS WAS AGAIN KICKED AND BEATEN, LOSING A TOOTH. THE WITNESS WAS THEN LED OUT OF THE ROOM AS THREE MORE PRISONERS WERE BROUGHT IN. THESE WERE ADAM ZELEZIC AND HIS SON MLADEN, AND AN ELDERLY MAN, HAZIM KARAHASANOVIC, WHO WAS BORN IN 1908. OUTSIDE THE HEARING ROOM, THE WITNESS WAS TOLD TO WAIT NEXT TO A.H., WHO WAS COMPLETELY COVERED IN BLOOD. BELIEVING THEY WOULD BE KILLED, THE WITNESS RAN BACK TO THE WAREHOUSE. A.H., WHO WAS UNABLE TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WALK, WAS, INDEED, KILLED. AFTER 20 MINUTES, THE THREE OTHER PRISONERS RETURNED TO THE WAREHOUSE. ADAM AND MLADEN WERE INJURED BUT ABLE TO WALK. THE OLD MAN, HAZIM, HAD TO BE CARRIED IN.

17. (U) SOME TIME LATER A POLICEMAN FROM BIJELJINA CAME TO THE WAREHOUSE AND ORDERED THE PRISONERS TO PAIR OFF IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM AND TO PUNCH EACH OTHER IN THE FACE. AFTERWARD, TWO OTHER POLICEMEN ENTERED. THEY STOOD BEHIND THE PRISONERS AND BEAT ANYONE WHO DID NOT STRIKE HIS PARTNER HARD ENOUGH. THE WITNESS SAID HE WAS SEVERELY BEATEN BY HIS PARTNER, WHO WAS MUCH YOUNGER AND VERY STRONG. THIS LASTED ABOUT TWO HOURS, UNTIL ALL THE PAIRS WERE FINISHED. THEY WERE THEN FORCED TO HAVE BOXING MATCHES. DURING THIS PHASE, THE WITNESS' FATHER, WHO WAS 70 YEARS OLD, WAS FORCED TO BOX A MAN OF 20. FOR THE REST OF THE EVENING SERBS WOULD ENTER THE

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R 281620Z FEB 94
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DARKENED WAREHOUSE AND BEAT PEOPLE RANDOMLY. AT
ABOUT 2200, FOUR SERBS ENTERED AND TOOK ALL VALUABLES
FROM THE PRISONERS.

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18. (U) THE NEXT DAY WAS MUCH THE SAME ROUTINE, BUT
THAT NIGHT AND FOR THE REST OF THE TIME THE WITNESS
WAS IN LUKA, SERBS CAME IN WITH FLASHLIGHTS AND TOOK
20 TO 30 PRISONERS EACH NIGHT. THE OTHER PRISONERS
WOULD THEN HEAR SHOTS AND SCREAMS. THE NEXT DAY,
FOUR MEN WOULD BE TAKEN EITHER TO LOAD BODIES INTO
REFRIGERATOR TRUCKS OR TO THROW THEM INTO THE SAVA
RIVER.

19. (U) ONE PRISONER, MIRSAD MUJAGIC, WHO WAS A
POLICEMAN BEFORE THE WAR, WAS BEATEN BY TWELVE
BLACK-CLAD SERBS WITH BASEBALL BATS. THEY
SYSTEMATICALLY BROKE HIS FINGERS, ARMS, AND KNEES.
THEN, RANKO CESIC, ONE OF THE MAIN SERBS FROM BRCKO,
KILLED MUGAJIC WITH A PISTOL. WITH CESIC WAS MIODRAG
CAJEVIC, ALSO FROM BRCKO.

110. (U) TWO DAYS LATER, A SERBIAN CAPTAIN, DRAGAN
KABLINOVIC, WHO WORKED IN THE SAME FACTORY AS THE
WITNESS, CAME INTO THE WAREHOUSE LOOKING FOR SEVEN
YOUNG MEN TO CLEAN UP GLASS AT THE MEDICAL CLINIC.
THE WITNESS ASKED TO BE TAKEN AS WELL, AND HIS REQUEST
WAS GRANTED. AT THE CLINIC, THEY WERE GREETED BY
ABOUT 70 SERBS STANDING IN TWO ROWS WAITING TO BEAT
THE SEVEN MEN TO DEATH. ONE OF THE SERBS, HOWEVER, A
MAN NAMED MICIN, REFUSED TO ALLOW THEM TO HIT THE MEN
MORE THAN ONCE. AN EARLIER GROUP OF VICTIMS WAS NOT
SO LUCKY, AS THEY WERE LYING ON THE GROUND COVERED IN
BLOOD AND UNABLE TO STAND. TWO DAYS LATER, THE
WITNESS LEARNED THAT MICIN TOOK ADAM ZEZEZIC AND HIS

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SON MLADEN TO THE WITNESS' HOUSE WHERE ADAM'S WIFE
WAS STAYING. THEY TOLD MICIN THAT THE WITNESS WAS
ALSO IN LUKA AND ASKED HIM TO GET HIM. THE NEXT DAY,
MAY 14, MICIN RETRIEVED THE WITNESS FROM LUKA AND
TOOK HIM TO THE WITNESS' HOUSE. THEY STAYED IN THEIR
LARGE APARTMNT TWO MONTHS UNDER HOUSE ARREST, UNTIL,
ON JULY 14, ALL THE MUSLIM MEN FROM THAT AREA WERE
TAKEN IN THREE BUSES TO THE PRISON CAMP "BATKOVIC"
NEAR BIJELJINA.

BATKOVIC PRISON CAMP

11. (U) THE WITNESS SAID THAT THE PRISONERS WERE
BEATEN AT LEAST TEN TIMES A DAY AT BATKOVIC. THE
WITNESS BELIEVED THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 1,600
PRISONERS. THE WITNESS LIVED IN A 14 METER BY 20

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METER WAR

EHOUSE WHERE PRISONERS WERE FORCED TO SIT
WITH THEIR HEADS DOWN AND WERE BEATEN AT RANDOM. THE
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WITNESS SAID AT
LEAST 13 PRISONERS DIED OF BEATINGS, BUT HE WAS
UNABLE TO PROVIDE ANY NAMES. THE WITNESS WAS ABLE TO
IDENTIFY ONE AS THE OWNER OF A JEWELRY STORE AND
ANOTHER AS A COLLEGE PROFESSOR. THE WITNESS SAID
THAT EKREM CUDIC FROM BRCKO WAS FORCED TO WORK EVEN
THOUGH VERY ILL AND WAS BADLY BEATEN FOR NOT BEING
ABLE TO WORK HARDER. ONE DAY, EKREM CUDIC TOOK AWAY
A GUARD'S RIFLE AND SLAPPED HIM. THE OTHER GUARDS
SHOT AND KILLED HIM.

12. (U) ACCORDING TO THE WITNESS, THE MOST CRUEL
GUARDS AT THE BATKOVIC CAMP WERE GLIGOR BEGOVIC AND
DZEMAL ("SPAJZER") ZAHIROVIC , A GYPSY FROM ZENICA
WHO WAS LIKE A TRUSTEE OR KAPO. THE DIRECTOR OF THE
CAMP WAS VELIBOR ("VELJO") STOJANOVIC; HIS SUPERIOR
WAS A JNA COLONEL NAMED PETAR DMITROVIC.

13. (U) THE WITNESS SAID THAT CONDITIONS WERE VERY
DIFFICULT FOR THE FIRST MONTH IN THE BATKOVIC CAMP,
UNTIL A VISIT FROM ICRC WAS ANNOUNCED. UNTIL THEN,
PRISONERS HAD ONLY ONE BLANKET APIECE TO COVER THE
BARE CONCRETE FLOOR. AFTERWARDS, THEY WERE GIVEN
STRAW FOR THE FLOOR. BEFORE THE ICRC ARRIVED, A CORN
CRIB WAS EMPTIED AND SOME OF THE MEN WERE MOVED
THERE. THE ICRC WAS TOLD THESE MEN WERE REFUGEES,
NOT PRISONERS. ALSO, ABOUT 15 REGULAR PRISONERS WERE
TAKEN AWAY TO A BUNKER EVERY TIME THE ICRC VISITED.
THESE WERE 14 CIVILIANS AND ONE SOLDIER, A MAN NAMED
NEDIM MOSTAREVIC. BEFORE EACH VISIT THE GUARDS WOULD
ALSO REMOVE ABOUT 150 PEOPLE (CHILDREN AND MEN OVER
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55) AND HIDE THEM IN A DISTANT FIELD. THE NAME OF
THE CAMP WAS ALSO CHANGED FROM "CONCENTRATION CAMP
BATKOVIC" TO "COLLECTIVE CENTER BATKOVIC". THIS
BECAME VERY IMPORTANT, SINCE MEN WHO RECEIVED MAIL
FROM THE RED CROSS WITH THE WRONG ADDRESS WERE
SEVERELY BEATEN ONCE THE MEN WERE REGISTERED BY THE
ICRC, THEY WERE CONFIDENT THEY WOULD NOT BE KILLED,
BUT THEY WERE STILL BEATEN REGULARLY.

14. (U) ON OCTOBER 5, 1992, THE WITNESS WAS
RELEASED IN A PRISONER EXCHANGE.

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